

REGULAR MEETING OF THE JASPER COUNTY COUNCIL
November 18, 2014

The Jasper County Council met this date at 7:00 P.M. C.S.T. in the Commissioners' Room, Suite 202, of the Jasper County Courthouse located at 115 West Washington Street, Rensselaer, Indiana, with the following members present: Rein O. Bontreger, H. Dan Stalbaum, Ronald G. Sipkema, Gerrit H. DeVries, John T. Price, Stephen R. Jordan and Andrew Andree. Also present was Kimberly K. Grow, Auditor of Jasper County, and Donna J. Horner, Deputy Auditor. Mr. Bontreger called the meeting to order and those present stood and recited the Pledge of Allegiance led by Mr. Andree.

MINUTES: Mr. Andree made a motion to approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting held on October 21, 2014. Mr. Price seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION / DONATIONS ANIMAL SHELTER FUND: Advertised in the Donations Animal Shelter Fund, Other Financial Uses, Outreach/Education was \$1,341.00. The amount requested will be used to reimburse shelter employees for expenses related specifically to the Little Cousin Jasper parade. Mr. Bontreger asked Krsiten Bahleda, Animal Control Director, when people are donating to the donation fund, what are their expectations as to what the money is going to go toward? Do you have any kind of a policy or stipulation that will allow donors to choose where they want the money to go towards? Ms. Bahleda replied that there is no policy. It is assumed that the donations go towards the animals; however, outreach also helps bring in more donations. Mr. DeVries asked if there were any other funds from where this money could be taken rather than from the donation fund? Ms. Bahleda replied, "No, there are not". Mr. DeVries asked if Ms. Bahleda had checked with any of those who had donated to see if this would be okay with them? Ms. Bahleda replied, "No". A lot of the donations are made anonymously. Mr. Sipkema made a motion to approve **Ordinance No. 2014-11A** as advertised. Mr. Stalbaum seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

TRANSFER / CORONER'S BUDGET: A request has been made to transfer \$3,000.00 from Other Services & Charges, Pathologist into Personal Services, Deputies within the County General Fund, Coroner's Budget. Mr. Jordan made a motion to approve the transfer as requested. Mr. Stalbaum seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

TRANSFER / COMMISSIONERS' BUDGET: A request has been made to transfer \$55,000.00 from Other Services & Charges, Care of Inmates into Personal Services, PERF Retirement within the County General Fund, Commissioners' Budget. Mr. Stalbaum made a motion to approve the transfer as requested. Mr. Andree seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

TRANSFER / VETERAN SERVICE OFFICE BUDGET: A request has been made to transfer \$61.06 from Other Services & Charges, Travel into Supplies, Supplies within the County General Fund, Veteran Service Office. Mr. Stalbaum made a motion to approve the transfer as requested. Mr. Sipkema seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

SMALL BUSINESS TAX BREAK: Discussion was led by Mr. Price in regards to Senator Hershman's law allowing exemptions for small businesses with less than \$25,000.00 in business equipment (personal property). Mr. Price explained that people who have over \$25,000.00 in business equipment (personal property) pay \$2,163,000.00 plus. People under \$25,000.00 pay only \$71,506.00 (1302 taxpayers) which works out to be an average of about \$54.92 a taxpayer. In speaking to a small business person in regards to the personal property form, Mr. Price stated that they stated that the form was so complicated that they have their accountant do it. In speaking with an accountant, Mr. Price stated that the accountant agreed that there are a lot of calculations involved; however, it is not a problem for the accounting firms because they have the specialized software. The accountant charges a minimum of \$85.00. So, you could theoretically have someone paying \$85.00 and paying as little as \$15.00 in tax. This is not a very good return for the taxpayer's investment. We all talk about helping small business.

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SMALL BUSINESS TAX BREAK CON'T: My feeling is if people had the time to grow their business, their incomes might go up and we might ultimately end up collecting more tax revenue than the \$71,000.00 we are collecting now. Mr. Price has been in contact with Senator Hershman's office and would like to volunteer to gather additional information if the Council agrees. Mr. Bontreger stated that he saw that they proposed a flat rate to replace some of the lost revenue for somebody who is a smaller business. Is that factored in to what you're finding out as well? Mr. Price replied that Senator Hershman is trying to get a bill out of committee to lower it from \$25,000.00 to \$20,000.00 and make the business pay a \$50.00 flat fee. Mr. DeVries replied that Indiana currently ranks eighth in tax rankings across the country. This means that when it comes to all of the variety of taxes that really effect families and businesses, Indiana right now is in the top ten of how good it is. A business personal property tax is a last remnant of taxation upon personal property. This tax is what is termed a taxpayer active tax in contrast to taxpayer passive. This means that it is entirely dependent upon the business owners themselves to be honest and to compile the personal property they have. The problem is that the bill which Senator Hershman has authored will undoubtedly open a can of worms even though his proposal sounds so innocently nice. It allows not only the exemption of \$20,000.00 but it also creates the threshold in that one does not even need to file anything if they feel the amount of their business personal property in its depreciated state is less than \$20,000.00. Since it is not monitored by anyone other than the business owner, one would be rather naïve to think that if a business considers their personal property to be valued at \$22,000.00 or \$23,000.00, the chances are they may still not file at all because they could probably reasonably say that it's depreciated. The idea that it is so arduous a task to compile your list of business personal property assets is an exaggeration. I had easily kept record of all of the equipment that I had purchased through the years, passed it on to my accountant, he simply did the appreciation each year and I paid the bill. Jasper County is listed as one that has over 14% of business personal property in net assessed value. We also have a very low percentage of properties nearing the tax caps. This would place us in the area of actually 12.3% increase in tax shift to real property should we start to decrease or to eliminate the tax on business personal property. Who is going to pay this difference? Once again, it will shift to homeowners and the families. Is that what you want to see occur? I certainly do not. The bill that was passed in March of 2014 allows for our county to do a number of things; however, it does not say we should. It also allows for such things that will pit one county against another by the options of exempting new business personal property completely as well as extending tax abatements for up to 20 years. The State Legislature has still, to my knowledge, not proposed any legislation that would provide supplement to the loss of that revenue from the tax on business personal property. This means that we (county) will have a loss of revenue from our traditional sources and be forced by the State Legislature to place this burden once again on the shoulders of our hard-working families here in Jasper County. The Association of Indiana Counties came out with this statement regarding this issue "None of the bills being considered in the General Assembly meet Governor Pence's standard expressed in the State of the State Address." What Governor Pence said was to make Indiana more competitive, let's find a responsible way to phase out this business tax but lets do it in a way that protects our local governments and doesn't shift the burden of a business tax onto the backs of hardworking Hoosiers. Mr. Price will continue to research.

COUNCIL MEETING SCHEDULE / 2015: Mr. Price made a motion to approve the following Jasper County Council Meeting Schedule for the Year 2015. Mr. DeVries seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Tuesday, January 20
Tuesday, February 24
Tuesday, March 17
Tuesday, April 21
Tuesday, May 19
Tuesday, June 16
Tuesday, July 14
Tuesday, August 18
Tuesday, September 15
Tuesday, October 20
Tuesday, November 17
Tuesday, December 15

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JASPER COUNTY AIRPORT / UPDATE: Brad Cozza, Manager / Jasper County Airport, thanked the Council for their support back in September and announced that the airport is officially armed and ready with their new snow removal equipment.

There being no further business, Mr. Sipkema made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Stalbaum seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Rein O. Bontreger, President

ATTEST:

Kimberly K. Grow, Auditor of Jasper County